Public Meeting
Boston to Montreal High Speed Rail Feasibility and Planning Study
November 14, 2002
Montpelier, VT

Twenty-five people attended the public meeting in Montpelier, Vermont on November 14, 2002. Below is a summary of questions and comments.

Q. Did you figure your ridership projections on a one-way fare between Boston and Montreal at $66?

A. *Yes.*

Q. Did you give any thought to an incremental process for implementing the service?

A. *Yes, we would expect a phased implementation is a strong possibility.*

Q. Have you looked at the Portland, Maine to Boston service as a model?

A. *Portland is an excellent demonstration that if you create a service that people want, people will use it. Ridership for the Downesater in its first year may exceed projections.*

Q. Wouldn't the service between Boston and Montreal be more successful if it ran more frequently than four times a day as projected in the ridership model?

A. *The model showed a lot of sensitivity to the number of train runs daily. Four seemed to be the most cost effective number.*

Q. Did you factor in the cost of highway maintenance when you used 12 cents/mile as the cost of driving?

A. *No. The model only measured what people see as the cost of a trip when they choose how to get to their destination. People look at trip cost, not overall cost. They calculate trip cost as the price of gas and tolls only.*

Q. Will the study be looking at the potential for freight in the corridor?

A. *Yes. In the initial phase of study the team talked with rail operators along the line. As benefits are identified and revenues defined in Phase II, the potential for use by freight will be explored.*

Q. How much time was allowed for station stops?

A. *Two minutes dwell time, with an additional 2-3 minutes allowed for acceleration and deceleration.*

Q. How many stations were used in the ridership numbers?

A. *Eight.*

Q. Are you assuming that Amtrak will be operating the service?
A. *No assumptions were made about who would operate the service.*

Q. On what basis did you figure fares in the ridership model?

A. *30 cents – Acela is 33-34 cents but caters to business clients who are willing to pay higher fares*
26 cents – Lower end of existing high speed rail fares
20 cents – Chosen as an experiment but revealed that lower fares caused a dramatic increase in riders and produced the most revenue of all fares

Q. What has to happen to get to Phase II?

A. *Support will come from two sources – the Federal Railroad Administration(FRA) and the three participating states – MA, NH and VT. FRA has already indicated its support and funds have been allocated by the federal government. The states needed to see there was sufficient ridership interest to continue into Phase II. Based on the initial projections, the states are in the process of earmarking funds for further study.*

Q. How much is FRA allocating for Phase II?

A. *About $500,000. The participating states will have to match that amount.*

Q. Maine has indicated interest in establishing a train service to Montreal, would it compete with this corridor?

A. *No. The two will complement each other as they would serve different regions. It is believed the more choices, the more riders. Additional train routes make it easier for people to choose trains over other means of travel. It's why cars are so successful; they get you where you want to go.*

Q. How can you justify a major investment in this service if you are only running trains four times a day?

A. *The service needs to be evaluated not only for the direct impact on people who might use it but for the positive impact it will have to the region in such things as economic development, tourism, etc.*

Q. When I see what they have in Europe I feel inferior, will we ever have train service like that in our country?

A. *No. The train routes in Europe were developed without the complicated legal and environmental framework we have in this country.*

Q. Is there any service between Montreal and New York today?

A. *Yes, there is an existing service already.*

Q. Of the ten or so other corridors designated for high speed rail, have any other reached the end of Phase I and did not continue on to Phase II study?

A. *A study of a corridor in Florida was stopped. However, it was restarted some time later. This corridor is unique in that the study was broken into two phases while the others we done as one study. States in this region took a more conservative approach, wanting to see evidence there would be sufficient ridership first before completing a thorough examination of feasibility.*